A

PHILOSOPHIC ODE

ON THE

SUN

AND THE

UNIVERSE.

Alme Sol, curru nitido diem qui
Promis et celas, aliuſque et idem
Naſceris, poſſis nihil urbe Româ
Viſere majus!
Hor. Carm. Sæc.

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M.DCC.L.

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INTRODUCTION.

WERE a Man introduced into the World at once, with all the powers and faculties of his ſoul in full vigour and perfection, how would he be aſtoniſh'd on ſurveying the magnificent ſcene of things before him; the Earth, the Air, the Seas, the azure vault of Heaven, the almoſt infinite variety of plants and animals, the glorious regent of the day bountifully diſpenſing light and heat to all around, the ſilver queen of night, and all the hoſt of Heaven paſſing nightly in review before him. But how would his admiration riſe, if he ſhould further be made

made acquainted with the diſcoveries of the Teleſcope, the Microſcope, and the Priſm; when he ſhould ſometimes be obliged to ſtretch his imagination to the utmoſt, to conceive the immenſity of the great whole, and ſoon again contract it to attend to the imperceptible minuteneſs, the ſurprizingly-fine and ſubtil texture, the amazingly-wiſe and appoſite diſpoſition of its conſtituent parts; would he not in awful tranſport cry out with the Pſalmiſt, *Great and marvellous art, thou O Lord! in all thy Ways, and wonderful in all thy Works!*

But as the human underſtanding opens gradually, this ſtupendous ſcene becomes familiar before the underſtanding is mature: and when men have arrived at maturity, their lives, their reaſon, all the powers of their ſouls, are ſo engroſs'd in providing the neceſſaries of life, or in ſupplying the wants of luxury, they are either ſo totally involved in buſineſs, or immers'd in pleaſures, that few ever ſet apart one ſingle hour for con-

contemplating the wonders of nature; add to this, that many perſuade themſelves that ſuch ſpeculations are too ſublime, difficult and abſtruſe, and, beſides, of no great uſe or advantage. Hence it is that thoſe momentous truths, thoſe ſhining precepts, ſo legibly and diſtinctly wrote in the great volume of nature, are ſo little attended to, and loſe ſo much of their force and impreſſion.

Now I have thought that the compriſing a clear and ſuccinct idea of the univerſe in a little poem, and interſperſing ſome late diſcoveries therein, might be a means of gaining the attention of mankind, and of exciting them to ſerious contemplation: and a frequent and profound meditation upon the wonderful phænomena of the Univerſe cannot fail of making a deep impreſſion, ſo deep, that I ſhould think it impoſſible for Men, accuſtomed to ſuch meditations, to open their eyes to let in the light, without letting in, at the ſame time, an awful

INTRODUCTION.

awful idea of the majesty, goodness and omnipresence of the great Creator, than which nothing can more effectually contribute to the eradicating the profaneness and debauchery, the impiety and immorality, with which this devoted nation is at present over-run.

O D E

ON THE

S U N.

RADIANT Sovereign of the day!
Whoſe ſwift, whoſe all-enlivening ray
Diſpels the gloom of night;
Whoſe fulgent orb new life imparts,
Fills every eye, all grateful hearts,
With rapture and delight:

Line 1, 2.] The diſtance of the Sun from the Earth is about 81,000,000 of miles, which ſpace light moves over in 8' 13". Sun's diameter is about 700,000 miles. He revolves round his axis in about 25 days. Spots are frequently diſcover'd in him; he appears bigger, and is nearer the Earth in Winter than in Summer, and is about 116 times bigger than all the planets put together.

'Mongſt all the realms from pole to pole,
That in thy view inceſſant roll,
Diſtinguiſh *Britain*'s iſles.
Here liberty, and arts, and arms,
And beauty's all-commanding charms
Deſerve thy choiceſt ſmiles.

Oh! did fair *Virtue's* influence ſhine
But half ſo warm, ſo bright as thine,
How would this land be bleſt!
But ſee the lovely Goddeſs mourns,
Aſham'd to ſee *Britannia*'s ſons
By motley vice depreſt.

Do thou illume my riſing breaſt,
In all thy glories ſtand confeſt,
And all thy pow'rs reveal!

Be thou my *Muſe*, in every line
Let thy inſpiring ardor ſhine,
Let me thy preſence feel!

Thou wak'ſt the flow'ry pride of ſpring,
Thou giv'ſt the feather'd race to ſing,
And Nature's life reſtores:
From thee the vine's rich juices flow,
To thee the golden grain we owe,
Nurs'd by thy genial pow'rs.

In living green thou rob'ſt the earth,
And giv'ſt her rich embroid'ry birth,
That *Indid*'s gems outvies;
Thy vivid colours yonder glow
In that wide-ſtretch'd cœleſtial bow,
Great *Titian* of the ſkies!

Line 35.] The Sun-beams refracted and reflected by the drops of rain in a falling ſhower from the rainbow.—The center of the Sun, the center of the bow, and the eye of the ſpectator are always in a right line.

Thou lay'ſt enamel on the meads,
And all the rich profuſion ſpreads
That blows in each parterre:
The roſe's red, the violet's blue,
The tulip's variegated hue
Thy painting rays confer.

Thine are the tints that paint the eaſt,
All thine the glories of the weſt,
That ſtrike us with delight,
When fragrant morn's refreſhing pow'rs,
Or milder evening's peaceful hours
To verdant meads invite.

Thine

Thine are the charms that flush the face,
Thine every eye-delighting grace,
That makes the lover gaze:
Those light'nings, that resistless fly
From lovely *Delia*'s sparkling eye,
Are thy reflected rays.

Nor yet to scanty Earth alone
Is thy free bounteous favour shown,
Or only for her sake;

For

Line 49] This and the preceding verses are design'd to inculcate that great discovery of Sir *Isaac Newton*'s, that the Sun is the great source and fountain of colours. Let not the ladies quarrel with me, and imagine that this doctrine robs them of their beauty. If their faces have a power of separating and reflecting a charming assemblage of colours, 'tis the same thing as if the roses and the lillies actually inhered and grew there: Their charms are as much their own upon one supposition as upon the other. 'Tis more than probable that not only the different colours, but all the other different qualities of material objects arise from their texture; that the first or original particles of all sorts of matter are the same, and that the diversification of bodies arises only from the different modification and composition of these first particles.

For other beings, other ſpheres,
Thy wide-extending influence ſhare,
Thy cheering warmth partake.

All thoſe vaſt globes which thee attend,
And on thy warmth and light depend,
What ſecret power retains?
Their various orbits who inclin'd?
Their periods, diſtances, aſſign'd?
Their forces, laws, ſuſtains?

There MERC'RY cloſe-attending ſtays,
Scarce e'er emerges from thy blaze
To unaſſiſted ſight:

Next

Line 64.] The Planets don't move all in the ſame plane. *Mercury*'s orbit is inclin'd to the plane of the ecliptic in an angle of 7° 0'—The inclination of *Venus*'s orbit is 3° 24'—of *Mars*'s 1° 52'—of *Jupiter*'s 1° 20'—of *Saturn*'s 2° 30'. The inclinations of the orbits of all comets are very great, ſo that the planets are leſs liable to be diſturb'd by them.

Line 67.] *Mercury* revolves round the Sun in 88 days; he is ſo near the Sun, that the time of his rotation upon his axis has not yet been obſerv'd. His diameter is only $\frac{1}{166}$ parts of that of the Sun; he is never further than 28 degrees remov'd from the Sun; ſometimes paſſes over the Sun's diſk, appearing like a black ſpot in the Sun.

Next lucid VENUS round thee whirls,
Her changing orb now wanes now fills,
The beauty of the night. 72

Here EARLH, and her attendant MOON,
Their annual race around thee run,
By ſtrong attraction ty'd;

Yet

Line 70.] *Venus* revolves round the Sun in 224½ days, round her axis in 23 hours (or, according to *Bianchini*, in 24 days 8 hours). She has phaſes like the Moon; her diameter is $\frac{13}{1000}$ parts of that of the Sun; her greateſt elongation from the Sun exceeds not 48 degrees.—When ſhe appears brighteſt, we ſee not above ¼ of her lucid diſk. Sometimes ſhe appears like a ſpot in the Sun; ſhe did ſo in 1639, and will again paſs over the Sun in *May* 1761; when, if aſtronomers are accurate and careful in their obſervations, the diſtance of the Earth from the Sun may be determined to within $\frac{1}{100}$ part of the whole.

Line 73.] The Earth revolves round the Sun in 365 days 5 hours 49 minutes, round her axis in 24 hours; her diameter is about $\frac{13}{1000}$ parts of that of the Sun, or 8000 miles; diſtance from the Sun about 81 millions of miles: but this will be more exactly known in 1761. The diſtance of the Earth from the Sun being once ſettled, and the periodical times of the other Planets being known, their ſeveral diſtances may be found by means of the general law which regulates their motions, and is hereafter mentioned.

The Earth's ſatellite, the Moon, is 240,000 miles diſtant from the Earth; her diameter is about $\frac{3}{100}$ parts of that of the Earth; ſhe compleats one entire revolution in her orbit in 27 days 7 hours, which is called a *periodical Revolution*; but 29½ days elapſe between one conjunction and another, which ſpace of time is called a *ſynodical Month* or *Revolution*. The ſame face of the Moon is always turned towards the Earth, and conſequently ſhe turns upon her axis in the ſame time that ſhe revolves round the Earth, that is, in 27 days 7 hours.

Yet often, in their ſocial courſe,
Each cloſes up thy lucid ſource,
And each thy glories hide.

Red fiery MARS, the next in place,
In æther's unreſiſting ſpace
Alone performs his rounds.
The great, the belt-encircled JOVE
Swiftly beyond is ſeen to move,
With twice two ſocial Moons.

To

Line 79.] *Mars* turns round the Sun in 1 year 322 days, upon his axis in 24 hours 40 minutes—His diameter is $\frac{6}{1000}$ parts of that of the Sun.

Line 82.] *Jupiter* revolves round the Sun in 11 years 315 days round, his axis in 9 hours 56 minutes; his diameter is $\frac{101}{1000}$ parts of that of the Sun. He has 4 Moons, or Satellites; the firſt, or neareſt whereof revolves round him in 1 day 18½ hours. The ſecond circulates in 3 days 13⅓ hours; the third compleats a revolution in 7 days 3¾ hours; the fourth in 16 days 16½ hours. Theſe Satellites paſs ſometimes behind *Jupiter*, ſometimes over him. The obſervation of the times of their immerſion and emerſion, or of their entering upon or behind *Jupiter*'s body, or diſk, and getting clear of it again, is of great uſe in determining longitudes: For, by comparing the obſerved times with the times mentioned in tables calculated for any place whoſe longitude is known, we get the difference in time between the two places, which is the difference of longitude.

To this thy vaſt, thy wide domain,
The ring-ſurrounded SATURN's reign
Aſſigns the bounding line.
Five Moons, the leaden planet nigh,
Thy much-enfeebled light ſupply,
And on his natives ſhine.

Line 86.] *Saturn* revolves round the Sun in 29 years and 166 days; he is ſo remote, that the time of his rotation upon his axis has not yet been obſerved. His diameter is $\frac{1}{10\frac{1}{2}\frac{1}{2}}$ parts of that of the Sun; his firſt Satellite revolves round him in 1 day 21½ hours; his 2d in 2 days 17⅓ hours; the 3d in 4 days 12¼ hours; the 4th in 15 days 22⅔ hours; the 5th in 79 days 7⅓ hours. The thickneſs of his ring is not great; its breadth is about equal to half his diameter.

Line 90.] That all the Planets are inhabited is an eſtabliſh'd article of the aſtronomical creed, with me at leaſt it is: The bulk of mankind nevertheleſs look upon this as a mere fancy and chimera, as an extravagant reverie of over-fond and over-credulous mathematicians. But credulity is not the foible of mathematicians; let us hear what they have to ſay in defence of this opinion. There are 6 Planets, which all revolve round the Sun, and round their own axis; three of them are nearly equal in bulk to the Earth, two of 'em are ſeveral hundred, nay thouſand times larger. The Earth, we know, is inhabited; we know too that the final cauſe of its revolution round the Sun and its own axis, is to produce the viciſſitudes of day and night, of ſummer and winter, for the convenience of its inhabitants. May we not then, by parity of reaſon, fairly conclude that the end and deſign of the revolutions of all the other Planets is the ſame? Is not this agreeable to that beautiful harmony, and uniformity of deſign which obtains in the univerſe? But it has been ſaid that the Planets, and all the hoſts of Heaven were created to manifeſt the power of the creator to man. That this is an effect of this grand and magnificent fabric is agreed, but that it was the final cauſe of its creation, *Credat Judæus Apella.*—To eſtabliſh this opinion

yet

All theſe to mortals Wand'rers ſeem,
But undeſerving ſuch a name
Is even the Comets' courſe:
One general law they all obey,
All ſtedfaſt keep th' appointed way,
And yield to impreſs'd force. 96

When

yet more firmly, let me aſk objectors a few queſtions. The Satellites, or Moons of *Jupiter* and *Saturn* are not perceptible by the naked eye, and known only to a few; and it will be readily granted that the Earth's Satellite, the Moon, is deſign'd to give light to the Earth in the abſence of the Sun. Now are not the Moons of *Jupiter* and *Saturn* probably deſign'd for the ſame purpoſe? Do we not ſee that the more remote a Planet is from the Suu, the greater apparatus it has for this purpoſe? *Jupiter* has 4, *Saturn* 5 Moons, and a Ring beſides, all probably intended to ſupply the light, and perhaps to encreaſe the heat of the Sun. Now if *Jupiter* and *Saturn* be not inhabited, to what end is all this care, all theſe wonderful contrivances to ſupply them with light and heat? But what reaſon is there to ſuppoſe the Planets uninhabited? Is there any thing but *human Pride* to induce men to believe that all thoſe millions of Suns (in compariſon with the leaſt of which this Earth is but a point, an atom) are only ſo many brilliants to embelliſh the azure mantle of night, and to form a rich and ſuperb canopy for the lord of this globe? Good heavens! how ridiculous is the vanity of this human reptile! not content with lording it over this ſpot of Earth, he muſt needs arrogate the homage of the univerſe, and refer all things to himſelf as to their ultimate and final cauſe!

Line 94.] The great *Kepler* firſt diſcover'd that the Planets move round the Sun, ſo as to deſcribe areas proportional to the times; and alſo that the ſquares of their periodical times are in proportion to each other as the cubes of their diſtances: But the greater Sir *Iſaac Newton* firſt fully illuſtrated and demonſtrated theſe two laws or theorems.

When devious Comets ſwift deſcend,
To thee their oblique courſe they bend,
To renovate their fire;

Line 97] The number of Comets belonging to this ſolar ſyſtem is not known, perhaps never will be: We know nothing at all of the Comets of the ſouthern hemiſphere, or thoſe whoſe aphelia are in the regions of the heavens ſouth of the ecliptic. We have a liſt of 24 or 25 of the northern Comets which have been obſerved, but there may be many more of them; for if, when a Comet enters within the limits of our ſyſtem, the poſition of its orbit with reſpect to the Earth be ſuch, that a line drawn from the Earth to the Comet and continued, terminates in the Sun, or in thoſe parts of the heavens near the Sun, 'tis plain the Sun's vicinity and ſuperior luſtre will hinder its being viſible: Many Comets therefore may have viſited us, and departed unobſerved; many, which formerly were inviſible, may at their next viſit make a ſignal and ſplendid appearance; and others, which have formerly terrify'd mankind, may at their next return be inviſible.

The obliquity or inclination of the orbits of Comets to the plane of the ecliptic (in or near which plane all the Planets move) is ſo great, that the motions of the regular Planets are not near ſo liable to be diſordered and diſturb'd by comets, or irregular Planets, as they would otherwiſe have been. But yet every Comet in its way to and from the Sun paſſes the plane of the ecliptic in two places, and therefore the time may come when a Comet may approach ſo nigh the Earth, as that the two globes may ruſh together with inconceivable violence and force. In ſuch a caſe, the whole ſurface of this globe would be conſum'd in a moment; magnificent palaces, and opulent cities, haughty potentates, and their numerous ſubjects, all the works of art, all the productions of nature, Earth and ſeas, with all their various tribes of plants and animals, would be involv'd in one common ruin, in the twinkling of an eye would be converted into a vaſt cloud of vapour, duſt and ſmoke. Nor would the aſhes of the mighty fabric receive the honour of a common obſequies, they would not be entomb'd in a grave, or incloſ'd in an urn, but would be wildly toſſed and agitated round the ſolid burning maſs, juſt as furious blaſts, or devouring flames impell'd them; whilſt ſuch parts of this globe, whoſe denſity prevented their diſſipation, would coaleſce, and be united to the Comet, and the new-form'd globe would ſtrike out a new path in the ethereal regions. And yet, awful and tremendous as this dreadful union ſeems to us little mortals, it would be with reſpect to the univerſe a trifling event, of no more importance than the colliſion of two falling drops of rain is with reſpect to this earthly globe.

Then with a lengthen'd, ſplendid train
To regions far remote again
Reluctantly retire.

Their ſtretching tails portentous blaze
With terror and with wild amaze
The gazing nations fill,
Whilſt bold aſtronomy explores
Their natures, periods, diſtance, pow'rs,
With ſcientific ſkill.

Eight hundred millions mete the ſpace
From thee to ſlow-pac'd SATURN's place;
A diſtance vaſt, immenſe!

Yet

Line 102.] From the laſt note it follows that comets or planets move quicker as they approach the Sun, and that their motion is retarded in receding from it.

Yet thrice ten thouſand times as far
'Tis, ere we reach the nigheſt ſtar
That ſtuds the blue expanſe.

In yonder Galaxy, 'tis true,
The heaps of ſtars to mortal view
Form one continuous white;
Each ſtar ſeems join'd to other's ſide,
Yet ſpaces no leſs vaſt divide
Thoſe twinklers of the night.

On cloſer view, amazing ſcene!
In every ſtar a ſun is ſeen,
Like thee as great, as bright;

Round

Line 115] I ſhould be glad to ſee ſome probable conjectures concerning this phænomenon. One thing I infer from it, which is this; that the univerſe, or the creation, is finite, contrary to the opinion of the celebrated Dr *Halley*: For if the univerſe, or the creation, were infinite, as that great man ſuppoſed, this conglomeration of ſtars in one part of the heavens would not appear, but they would ſeem pretty equally diſpos'd all around us.

Round each revolving planets roll,
Like earth illum'd, from pole to pole,
By floods of ſtarry light.

Sudden ſometimes a ſtranger ſtar
Will in the azure plains appear,
But meteor-like ſoon end:
Another ſyſtem's Comets theſe,
Or are they Suns, whoſe feeble rays
With ſooty cruſts contend?

Thus grand the wide Creation's reign,
Thus furniſh'd the ethereal plain,
Still teeming with new birth:

But

Line 130] Is not this conjecture probable? The common opinion is that theſe new ſtars are Suns, which having been ſuffocated and obſcur'd for a time by copious fuliginous vapours, at length break through them, and ſhine out; but that their light is by degrees again overcome and ſuppreſs'd.

But what is this to boundleſs ſpace,
Where worlds and matter have no place?
A garden to the earth.

NEWTON, immortal NEWTON, roſe;
This mighty frame, its order, laws,
His piercing eye beheld:
That SUN *of Science* pour'd his ſtreams,
All Darkneſs fled before his beams,
And Nature ſtood reveal'd.

By Man be Heaven's commands rever'd,
Be Nature, Reaſon, always heard,
Let theſe his actions rule:

So

Line 138] Whether the creation be finite or infinite, is a point yet agitated amongſt the learned, as has been before obſerv'd: For my part, I believe it finite, and that, immenſe as the ſpot is which creation has cultivated, it bears a far leſs proportion to infinite ſpace, than a ſmall garden, or even a grain of ſand, does to the whole Earth.

So that his mind each day improve,
Each day inſpire cœleſtial love,
And ſublimate his ſoul.

Though NEWTON's genius cloudleſs ſhone,
Diſcover'd truths before unknown,
By none before believ'd;
The time will come when ſuch ſhall know
Much more than NEWTON ever knew,
Than fancy e'er conceiv'd.

Yes, time a meſſenger ſhall ſend,
Who ſhall all doubts and ſcruples end,
And clearer views preſent;

When

Line 154] By *ſuch* I mean they who live in the manner recommended in the preceding verſe. Others, whoſe minds have acquir'd a contrary bent, may have no reliſh for theſe pleaſures; and, for a puniſhment, may be immers'd deeper, and united more ſtrongly to unactive matter hereafter, than they are in their preſent ſtate of impriſonment.

Line 159] A deſire of novelty, and thirſt after knowledge is natural to the human mind; I therefore preſume that the gratification thereof will be one of the pleaſures of the bleſs'd: And what an ample field does the univerſe afford! How many ages would paſs in barely informing ourſelves of the number of worlds?

When quick as thought our poſts we'll change,
From World to World advent'rous range,
Through all the wide extent. 162

------- But let us not, in wonder loſt, forget
The architect divine,-all-good, all-wiſe, all-powerful;
Who ſpake to being this ſtupendous fabric,
Bade ſpirit, matter, all from nothing riſe,
Stretch'd boundleſs *ſpace*, and arch'd the azure ſkies;
Plac'd every ſyſtem, kindled every Sun,
And bade each globe its deſtin'd circle run;

worlds? How many more in acquainting ourſelves with the forms, the nature, the employment of their ſeveral inhabitants? How many more ſtill in enquiring into their revolutions and mutations, their antiquity and hiſtory, their arts and ſciences? Thus we ſee the gratification of one ſingle deſire would require almoſt an eternity.—But who can deſcribe, or even conceive, the joys that will flow from the mutual love and benevolence, that will eternally and uninterruptedly reign amongſt the Bleſſed, that is to ſay, amongſt the ſpirits of the beſt of men, and the beſt and greateſt of every other claſs of rational beings?—And how vaſtly ſhort will all this be of the unſpeakable happineſs that will ariſe from a more intimate communication with, and a clearer perception of, the great and ſupreme author of our and all other being!—Add to this, that in the new bodies we ſhall be clothed with, numberleſs inlets of pleaſure and happineſs may be open'd, that we can now have no more conception of, than a man born blind can have of light, colours, or the pleaſures of ſight.

To every world its proper beings gave,
With all that's needful to preſerve and ſave:
To thee, the origin of all, the greateſt, beſt,
Be all our love, our gratitude, our praiſe addreſt! 173

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